

Lincoln Theatre



Originally opened in 1927, this South Central theater is now a 1,960-seat church. The Lincoln Theatre was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

Designed by John Paxton Perinne and built by Adam Ramish, the Lincoln Theatre at Central Ave. and 23rd Street, opened in 1926 and became the largest venue for black entertainment in the West. As one of the first theatres in the country and Southern California for African American audiences, the Lincoln featured motion pictures, live stage shows, talent shows and vaudeville, earning critical acclaim as the "West Coast Apollo."

Bardu Ali's band served as master of ceremonies for the Lincoln Theatre. Noted performers at the Lincoln Theatre included Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and Lionel Hampton. Curtis Mosby's orchestra, the Dixieland Blues Blowers, performed at the opening of the theatre. Bill Russell's revue also provided entertainment at the premiere (Cox 19, Reed 423,

Otis 13-15, Sentinel). Sunday stage attractions at the Lincoln Theatre cost thirty cents for adults, ten cents for children (Cox 31).

By 1940 the Lincoln Theatre competed for business with other local venues including the Bill Robinson Theatre at 4319 Central Ave., the Florence Mills Theatre at 3511 Central Ave., the Hub Theatre at 1007 Central Ave., the Rosebud Theatre at 1940 Central Ave., and the Savoy Theatre at 5326 Central Avenue (Central Avenue District Directory -- CADD).

For almost a year after it opened, the Lincoln Theatre was the only entertainment available to blacks in a racially segregated environment.